

Roger and the Second Crusade
227

and was now at the gates of Constantinople, Manuel's fear of the French was increased to a degree when the news came at the same moment that the Normans had made a sudden attack upon his western coast.

In the autumn of 1147, a powerful fleet left Otranto under command of George of Antioch; the nucleus of this armada was formed of galleys built with two or three banks of oars (biremes and triremes); a great number of transports carried the army with all its equipment. Again Corfu fell into Norman hands, its inhabitants readily forswearing their allegiance to the Basileus, and a garrison was installed in the high rock-fortress that commanded the island. Hence a series of plundering raids wasted the coasts of Acarnania and JEtolia, while Methane, Cephalonia, and other islands were occupied. The main fleet then turned its prows to the Bay of Crisseon; from this basis Chalcis, Eubcea, and Athens were harassed by piratical visits,

The blow had been timed for the moment when Louis, the unofficial ally of Sicily, should be at the gates of Constantinople, and Conrad, the hereditary enemy, should be entering the wilds of Rum:

it was a moment most critical for
Manuel, For
the French host, straggling from
Philipopolis to
the capital, was filled with dangerous
resentment
towards the Greeks. The crusading
soldiers,
seeking provisions or arms from the
natives, had
been on several occasions roughly
handled, It